

is the old buzz of the fly again, the old cobweb swinging from the corner, the old gaunt white faces like leprous blotches on a charnel-house. Each stain of the wall is printed in my mind. I have counted each year's slow growth on the lichen of the log beside me; that spider dragging about her tiny blue bag of eggs, I can tell all the eggs by name. The day declines, the sunshine falls in my face. I am scarcely so strong that I can turn away from it; yet have I had more vigor to-day than for many a weary while before, for there are times when I am not even able to wish. Yet fear not—I remember to have read—fear not those which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul.

This is a day of June, when this same sunshine that disturbs me now lies thick and rich in the meadows; when the bluebird's wing has less brilliant azure than the deep, deep sky; when the wild-rose lines the way-side with its blushing tangle, and the sweet smell of the fern makes heavy the afternoon air with its balsams. Ah! to see the field all goldenly embroidered in its butter-cups; just to toss up the long well-sweep, and draw one glittering bucket shaking back crystals into the cold dark shaft of the well; to roll in the grass with Madge and my boy; to feel the puff of the light wind on my face. This den I can not endure much longer; its foul air reeks; all its accumulation of suffering becomes my own. The inexorable rise and fall of the sea seems a forbidding fiat, and that long roller forever breaking on the beach a sterner barrier than the cruel dead-line here.

All weary as I—nearly as weary as I. I hear their faint mumble; I see their crawling forms; I feel the aching and the longing. It lies before me, and the terror and the anguish grow till I seem to myself like that man whose prison walls narrowed every day about him until they crushed him like a fly; for these creatures are becoming idiots. Great Heaven! I have kept courage so far, not to lose it now, I pray! Yet men have gone mad with less. It is as if one were conscious of mouldering in the grave. But rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Ah, this must be that place!

Oftentimes, of late, as I lie here in the dead of the night, I hear faint voices of the air threatening above me. It is a strange rune they sing, like that of the old Lyke-Wake Dirge:

"This ae night, this ae night,  
Every night and alle,  
Fire and saut and candle-lighte,  
And Christe receive thy saule."

With what significance do they chant it over and over, and do they prophesy, the weird sisters, as they sing? Fire and salt and candle-light—I shall not get it here—so much I know:

"If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,  
Every night and alle,  
Sit thee down and put them on,  
And Christe receive thy saule."

"If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gavest nane,  
Every night and alle,  
The whinnes shall pricke thee to the bare bane,  
And Christe receive thy saule."

Sad voices, have I read your rede aright, and is there boding in your burden meant for me? Or, is it my fate to hear a dirge you sing on a windy hill-side far away in a distant country? Yet that I will not think; for as often as I mark the strain I see pale faces fluttering before my eyes, aimless and wan, as if, only half-dead, half-dead and starved, already I made consort with phantoms.

"If ever thou gavest meate or drinke,  
Every night and alle,  
The fire shall never make thee shrinke,  
And Christe receive thy saule."

"If meat or drinke thou never gavest nane,  
Every night and alle,  
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane,  
And Christ receive thy saule."

Ah, solemn shrift! it was not so awful to me once, repeating your quaint words, and picturing in the dark frame-work of the night the sparkling fire-light, the fair tapers, and the salt on the dead man's breast.

But these are unwholesome humors of mine—humors that the memory of an old-time rhyme may bring me, and a shrill noise in my head like a humming of bells miles away over water, or the wind blowing in any hollow sea-shore shell: while the sun shines, at least, I need not submit myself to their caprice. The blessed sun, father of heaven and earth, under his beams no one quite forsaken or forlorn—it is only in the dark that judgment fails, the brain benumbs, pain grows intolerable. Now let me set myself to watch that sunbeam creep up my side and vanish into shadow. Some day I shall be satisfied with just that task—that one blue line of sky, so far and fathomless, will be serene content—that yellow sunshine limned along the wall will be joy itself; then perhaps, though prison doors never open, a free spirit will soar away eternally into the infinite blue and sunlight of heaven. If that hour were only here at last! Dozing and dozing the days away, alas, I am so tired!

What! not done yet? I say to myself every time I lift my lids, and the old eyesore of the place vexes them afresh. At any rate, there is so much more time passed. Presently the night-chills will begin to creep in, and the heavy dews will gather on the wall; the green mould take heart, and spread near where the hot sunshine burned all day. Made of a handful of clay, why not reverse the stroke, and let us crumble back again? At least we should be free as all these other atoms are—these drops of moisture, these grains of growth. In following law most free. Now for the racking of one's bones in the dark. As for me, I have no odds to ask of Heaven!

And so to sleep again, if sleep will come.

How this tune rings in my ears! It may be Sunday at home; I have lost the reckoning of the days. Perhaps they are singing it up in the choir, and it echoes through the still aisles of the church, and down upon the green, and seems to the truant children sitting there like songs from another world. Or perhaps it is only that

Annie has called in little Madge from the afternoon play, and rocks her to sleep while she sings:

"So let my lamp be trimmed and fed,  
That whether I be quick or dead,  
That light shall shine,  
And down sad ways a glory shed,  
And ray divine."

Ah, patience, tired heart! and teach these patience that here in this dark strait about thee arraign their doom. I was stronger once than many of them, than a few of them wiser. Did I give them of my hosen and shoon, of my meat and drink?

What is it diverts them now, I wonder? Torpid and sluggish as snails, they are crawling down to the door. Some little break in the long monotone of the day—perhaps they have a fresh ration served, or is there news of battle? Letters—can there be letters? No, no; it is only a voice—the old humdrum tone. Vainly counting the roll for the thousandth time. But that hurrah—I did not think there was so much breath in them—that wild, keen cry. It is the order of exchange! Let me get down there, let me hasten, let me try and reach them! I among them? Oh, wait, wait!

That name? He will never answer to it

again. They dig his grave out on the sand to-night.

Another. Who replies to that? He—he? Shall he go walking up the long street, the dear familiar path? shall he take his wife to his heart again, and dandle his children, and feel his old mother's faltering hand stroke his hair—and I stay festering here?

Down, evil spirit, down! Who deserves better than he? Who is truer comrade in fight—who stouter friend in prison? Hail to his joy as if it were mine! Make it mine—feel it mine!

And that name. No one claims it. Dead, possibly. Yet it had a sound of pleasant things; I seem to have heard it somewhere before—

Did any one call me? Dare I dream—can it be—is it mine?

Oh, to breathe again! Oh, home, friends, country, my own once more! Oh, life restored while the grave gaped! To see you, dear child, in a week—to feel your soft touch, your embracing care! A week! A little while ago eternity seemed short till we should meet; now, can I live so long without you as seven days? Ah! crouched and crushed, I rise; I see a future; I feel my manhood. To my knees, to my knees—dear God, I am free!

## PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

IT is natural that friends should tenderly and frequently talk of the loved and lost, descanting upon their virtues, narrating the little incidents of a life ended, and dwelling with minute particularity upon traits of character which, under other circumstances, might have remained unnoted and be forgotten, but are invested now with a mournful interest which fixes them in the memory. This, and the general desire to know more of the man ABRAHAM LINCOLN, is the only excuse offered for the following simple sketch of some parts of the character of our beloved Chief Magistrate, now passed from earth.

All persons agree that the most marked characteristic of Mr. Lincoln's manners was his simplicity and artlessness; this immediately impressed itself upon the observation of those who met him for the first time, and each successive interview deepened the impression. People seemed delighted to find in the ruler of the nation freedom from pomposity and affectation, mingled with a certain simple dignity which never forsook him. Though oppressed with the weight of responsibility resting upon him as President of the United States, he shrank from assuming any of the honors, or even the titles, of the position. After years of intimate acquaintance with Mr. Lincoln the writer can not now recall a single instance in which he spoke of himself as President, or used that title for himself, except when acting in an official capacity. He always spoke "of his position and office vaguely, as "this place," "here," or other modest phrase. Once, speaking of the room

in the Capitol used by the Presidents of the United States during the close of a session of Congress, he said, "That room, you know, that they call"—dropping his voice and hesitating—"the President's room." To an intimate friend who addressed him always by his own proper title he said, "Now call me Lincoln, and I'll promise not to tell of the breach of etiquette—if you won't—and I shall have a resting-spell from 'Mister President.'"

With all his simplicity and unacquaintance with courtly manners, his native dignity never forsook him in the presence of critical or polished strangers; but mixed with his angularities and *bonhomie* was something which spoke the fine fibre of the man; and, while his sovereign disregard of courtly conventionalities was somewhat ludicrous, his native sweetness and straightforwardness of manner served to disarm criticism and impress the visitor that he was before a man pure, self-poised, collected, and strong in unconscious strength. Of him an accomplished foreigner, whose knowledge of the courts was more perfect than that of the English language, said, "He seems to me one grand gentilhomme in disguise."

In his eagerness to acquire knowledge of common things he sometimes surprised his distinguished visitors by inquiries about matters that they were supposed to be acquainted with, and those who came to scrutinize went away with a vague sense of having been unconsciously pumped by the man whom they expected to pump. One Sunday evening last winter, while sitting





ABRAHAM LINCOLN AT HOME.

alone with the President, the cards of Professor Agassiz and a friend were sent in. The President had never met Agassiz at that time, I believe, and said, "I would like to talk with that man; he is a good man, I do believe; don't you think so?" But one answer could be returned to the query, and soon after the visitors were shown in, the President first whispering, "Now sit still and see what we can pick up that's new." To my surprise, however, no ques-



tions were asked about the Old Silurian, the Glacial Theory, or the Great Snow-storm, but, introductions being over, the President said: "I never knew how to properly pronounce your name; won't you give me a little lesson at that, please?" Then he asked if it were of French or Swiss derivation, to which the Professor replied that it was partly of each. That led to a discussion of different languages, the President speaking of several words in different languages which had the same root as similar words in our own tongue; then he illustrated that by one or two anecdotes, one of which he borrowed from Hood's "Up the Rhine." But he soon returned to his gentle cross-examination of Agassiz, and found out how the Professor studied, how he composed, and how he delivered his lectures; how he found different tastes in his audiences in different portions of the country. When afterward asked why he put such questions to his learned visitor he said, "Why, what we got from him isn't printed in the books; the other things are."

At this interview, it may be remarked in passing, the President said that many years ago, when the custom of lecture-going was more common than since, he was induced to try his hand at composing a literary lecture—something which he thought entirely out of his line. The subject, he said, was not defined, but his purpose was to analyze inventions and discoveries—"to get at the bottom of things"—and to show when, where, how, and why such things were invented or discovered; and, so far as possible, to find where the first mention is made of some of our common things. The Bible, he said, he found to be the richest store-house for such knowledge; and he then gave one or two illustrations, which were new to his hearers. The lecture was never finished, and was left among his loose papers at Springfield when he came to Washington.

The simplicity of manner which shone out in all such interviews as that here noticed was marked in his total lack of consideration of what was due his exalted station. He had an almost morbid dread of what he called "a scene"—that is, a demonstration of applause such as always greeted his appearance in public. The first sign of a cheer sobered him; he appeared sad and oppressed, suspended conversation, and looked out into vacancy; and when it was over resumed the conversation just where it was interrupted, with an obvious feeling of relief. Of the relations of a senator to him he said, "I think that Senator——'s manner is more cordial to me than before." The truth was that the senator had been looking for a sign of cordiality from his superior, but the President had reversed their relative positions. At another time, speaking of an early acquaintance, who was an applicant for an office which he thought him hardly qualified to fill, the President said, "Well, now, I never thought M—— had any more than average ability when we were young men together; really I did not"—a pause.—

"But, then, I suppose he thought just the same about me; he had reason to, and—here I am!"

The simple habits of Mr. Lincoln were so well known that it is a subject for surprise that watchful and malignant treason did not sooner take that precious life which he seemed to hold so lightly. He had an almost morbid dislike for an escort, or guard, and daily exposed himself to the deadly aim of an assassin. One summer morning, passing by the White House at an early hour, I saw the President standing at the gateway, looking anxiously down the street; and, in reply to a salutation, he said, "Good-morning, good-morning! I am looking for a news-boy; when you get to that corner I wish you would start one up this way." There are American citizens who consider such things beneath the dignity of an official in high place.

In reply to the remonstrances of friends, who were afraid of his constant exposure to danger, he had but one answer: "If they kill me, the next man will be just as bad for them; and in a country like this, where our habits are simple, and must be, assassination is always possible, and will come if they are determined upon it." A cavalry guard was once placed at the gates of the White House for a while, and he said, privately, that he "worried until he got rid of it." While the President's family were at their summer-house, near Washington, he rode into town of a morning, or out at night, attended by a mounted escort; but if he returned to town for a while after dark, he rode in unguarded, and often alone, in his open carriage. On more than one occasion the writer has gone through the streets of Washington at a late hour of the night with the President, without escort, or even the company of a servant, walking all of the way, going and returning.

Considering the many open and secret threats to take his life, it is not surprising that Mr. Lincoln had many thoughts about his coming to a sudden and violent end. He once said that he felt the force of the expression, "To take one's life in his hand;" but that he would not like to face death suddenly. He said that he thought himself a great coward physically, and was sure that he should make a poor soldier, for, unless there was something in the excitement of a battle, he was sure that he would drop his gun and run at the first symptom of danger. That was said sportively, and he added, "Moral cowardice is something which I think I never had." Shortly after the presidential election, in 1864, he related an incident which I will try to put upon paper here, as nearly as possible in his own words:

"It was just after my election in 1860, when the news had been coming in thick and fast all day, and there had been a great 'Hurrah, boys!' so that I was well tired out, and went home to rest, throwing myself down on a lounge in my chamber. Opposite where I lay was a bureau, with a swinging-glass upon it"—(and here he got up and placed furniture to illustrate the position)—"and, looking in that glass, I saw

myself reflected, nearly at full length; but my face, I noticed, had *two* separate and distinct images, the tip of the nose of one being about three inches from the tip of the other. I was a little bothered, perhaps startled, and got up and looked in the glass, but the illusion vanished. On lying down again I saw it a second time—plainer, if possible, than before; and then I noticed that one of the faces was a little paler, say five shades, than the other. I got up and the thing melted away, and I went off and, in the excitement of the hour, forgot all about it—nearly, but not quite, for the thing would once in a while come up, and give me a little pang, as though something uncomfortable had happened. When I went home I told my wife about it, and a few days after I tried the experiment again, when [with a laugh], sure enough, the thing came again; but I never succeeded in bringing the ghost back after that, though I once tried very industriously to show it to my wife, who was worried about it somewhat. She thought it was "a sign" that I was to be elected to a second term of office, and that the paleness of one of the faces was an omen that I should not see life through the last term."

The President, with his usual good sense, saw nothing in all this but an optical illusion; though the flavor of superstition which hangs about every man's composition made him wish that he had never seen it. But there are people who will now believe that this odd coincidence was "a warning."

If Mr. Lincoln's critics may be trusted, he had too much goodness of heart to make a good magistrate. Certain it is that his continually-widening charity for all, and softness of heart, pardoned offenders and mitigated punishments when the strict requirements of justice would have dealt more severely with the criminal. It was a standing order of his office that persons on matters involving the issue of life and death should have immediate precedence. Nor was his kindness confined to affairs of state; his servants, and all persons in his personal service, were the objects of his peculiar care and solicitude. They bore no burdens or hardships which he could relieve them of; and if he carried this virtue to an extreme, and carried labors which others should have borne, it was because he thought he could not help it.

He was often waylaid by soldiers importunate to get their back-pay, or a furlough, or a discharge; and if the case was not too complicated, would attend to it then and there. Going out of the main-door of the White House one morning, he met an old lady who was pulling vigorously at the door-bell, and asked her what she wanted. She said that she wanted to see "Abraham the Second." The President, amused, asked who Abraham the First might be, if there was a second? The old lady replied, "Why, Lor' bless you! we read about the first Abraham in the Bible, and Abraham the Second is our President." She was told that the President was not in his office then, and

when she asked where he was, she was told, "Here he is!" Nearly petrified with surprise, the old lady managed to tell her errand, and was told to come next morning at nine o'clock, when she was received and kindly cared for by the President. At another time, hearing of a young man who had determined to enter the navy as a landsman, after three years of service in the army, he said to the writer, "Now do you go over to the Navy Department and mouse out what he is fit for, and he shall have it, if it's to be had, for that's the kind of men I like to hear of." The place was duly "moused out," with the assistance of the kind-hearted Assistant-Secretary of the Navy; and the young officer, who may read these lines on his solitary post off the mouth of the Yazoo River, was appointed upon the recommendation of the President of the United States. Of an application for office by an old friend, not fit for the place he sought, he said, "I had rather resign my place and go away from here than refuse him, if I consulted only my personal feelings; but refuse him I must." And he did.

This same gentleness, mixed with firmness, characterized all of Mr. Lincoln's dealings with public men. Often bitterly assailed and abused, he never appeared to recognize the fact that he had political enemies; and if his attention was called to unkind speeches or remarks, he would turn the conversation of his indignant friends by a judicious story, or the remark, "I guess we won't talk about that now." He has himself put it on record that he never read attacks upon himself, and if they were brought persistently before him he had some ready excuse for their authors. Of a virulent personal attack upon his official conduct he mildly said that it was ill-timed; and of one of his most bitter political enemies he said: "I've been told that insanity is hereditary in his family, and I think we will admit the plea in his case." It was noticeable that Mr. Lincoln's keenest critics and bitter opponents studiously avoided his presence; it seemed as though no man could be familiar with his homely, heart-lighted features, his single-hearted directness and manly kindness, and remain long an enemy, or be any thing but his friend. It was this warm frankness of Mr. Lincoln's manner that made a hard-headed old "hunker" once leave the hustings where Lincoln was speaking, in 1856, saying, "I won't hear him, for I don't like a man that makes me believe in him in spite of myself."

"Honest Old Abe" has passed into the language of our time and country as a synonym for all that is just and honest in man. Yet thousands of instances, unknown to the world, might be added to those already told of Mr. Lincoln's great and crowning virtue. He disliked innuendoes, concealments, and subterfuges; and no sort of approach at official "jobbing" ever had any encouragement from him. With him the question was not, "Is it convenient? Is it expedient?" but, "Is it right?" He steadily discountenanced all practices of government offi-



cers using any part of the public funds for temporary purposes; and he loved to tell of his own experience when he was saved from embarrassment by his rigid adherence to a good rule. He had been postmaster at Salem, Illinois, during Jackson's administration, William T. Barry being then Postmaster-General, and resigning his office, removed to Springfield, having sent a statement of account to the Department at Washington. No notice was taken of his account, which showed a balance due the Government of over one hundred and fifty dollars, until three or four years after, when, Amos Kendall being Postmaster-General, he was presented with a draft for the amount due. Some of Mr. Lincoln's friends, who knew that he was in straitened circumstances then, as he had always been, heard of the draft and offered to help him out with a loan; but he told them not to worry, and producing from his trunk an old pocket, tied up and marked, counted out, in six-pences, shillings, and quarters, the exact sum required of him, in the identical coin received by him while in office years before.

The honesty of Mr. Lincoln appeared to spring from religious convictions; and it was his habit, when conversing of things which most intimately concerned himself, to say that, however he might be misapprehended by men who did not appear to know him, he was glad to know that no thought or intent of his escaped the observation of that Judge by whose final decree he expected to stand or fall in this world and the next. It seemed as though this was his surest refuge at times when he was most misunderstood or misrepresented. There was something touching in his childlike and simple reliance upon Divine aid, especially when in such extremities as he sometimes fell into; then, though prayer and reading of the Scriptures was his constant habit, he more earnestly than ever sought that strength which is promised when mortal help faileth. His address upon the occasion of his re-inauguration has been said to be as truly a religious document as a state-paper; and his acknowledgment of God and His providence and rule are interwoven through all of his later speeches, letters, and messages. Once he said: "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day."

Just after the last presidential election he said: "Being only mortal, after all, I should have been a little mortified if I had been beaten in this canvass before the people; but that sting would have been more than compensated by the thought that the people had notified me that all my official responsibilities were soon to be lifted off my back." In reply to the remark that he might remember that in all these cares he was daily remembered by those who prayed, not to be heard of men, as no man had ever before been remembered, he caught at the homely phrase and said: "Yes, I like that phrase, 'not

to be heard of men,' and guess it's generally true, as you say; at least I have been told so, and I have been a good deal helped by just that thought." Then he solemnly and slowly added: "I should be the most presumptuous blockhead upon this footstool if I for one day thought that I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place without the aid and enlightenment of One who is wiser and stronger than all others."

At another time he said, cheerfully, "I am very sure that if I do not go away from here a wiser man, I shall go away a better man, for having learned here what a very poor sort of a man I am." Afterward, referring to what he called a change of heart, he said that he did not remember any precise time when he passed through any special change of purpose or of heart; but he would say that his own election to office, and the crisis immediately following, influentially determined him in what he called "a process of crystallization," then going on in his mind. Reticent as he was, and shy of discoursing much of his own mental exercises, these few utterances now have a value with those who knew him which his dying words would scarcely have possessed.

No man but Mr. Lincoln ever knew how great was the load of care which he bore, nor the amount of mental labor which he daily accomplished. With the usual perplexities of the office—greatly increased by the unusual multiplication of places in his gift—he carried the burdens of the civil war, which he always called "This great trouble." Though the intellectual man had greatly grown meantime, few persons would recognize the hearty, blithesome, genial, and wiry Abraham Lincoln of earlier days in the sixteenth President of the United States, with his stooping figure, dull eyes, care-worn face, and languid frame. The old, clear laugh never came back; the even temper was sometimes disturbed; and his natural charity for all was often turned into an unwonted suspicion of the motives of men, whose selfishness cost him so much wear of mind. Once he said, "Sitting here, where all the avenues to public patronage seem to come together in a knot, it does seem to me that our people are fast approaching the point where it can be said that seven-eighths of them were trying to find how to live at the expense of the other eighth."

It was this incessant demand upon his time, by men who sought place or endeavored to shape his policy, that broke down his courage and his temper, as well as exhausted his strength. Speaking of the "great flood-gates" which his doors daily opened upon him, he said, "I suppose I ought not to blame the aggregate, for each abstract man or woman thinks his or her case a peculiar one, and must be attended to, though all others be left out; but I can see this thing growing every day." And at another time, speaking of the exhaustive demands upon him, which left him in no condition for more important duties, he said, "I sometimes fancy

that every one of the numerous grist ground through here daily, from a Senator seeking a war with France down to a poor woman after a place in the Treasury Department, darted at me with thumb and finger, picked out their especial piece of my vitality, and carried it off. When I get through with such a day's work there is only one word which can express my condition, and that is—*flabbiness*." There are some public men who can now remember, with self-reproaches, having increased with long evening debates that reducing "flabbiness" of the much-enduring President.

Mr. Lincoln visited the Army of the Potomac in the spring of 1863, and, free from the annoyances of office, was considerably refreshed and rested; but even there the mental anxieties which never forsook him seemed to cast him down, at times, with a great weight. We left Washington late in the afternoon, and a snow-storm soon after coming on, the steamer was anchored for the night off Indian Head, on the Maryland shore of the Potomac. The President left the little knot in the cabin, and sitting alone in a corner, seemed absorbed in the saddest reflections for a time; then, beckoning a companion to him, said, "What will you wager that half our iron-clads are at the bottom of Charleston Harbor?" This being the first intimation which the other had had of Dupont's attack, which was then begun, hesitated to reply, when the President added, "The people will expect big things when they hear of this; but it is too late—*too late!*"

During that little voyage the captain of the steamer, a frank, modest old sailor, was so much affected by the care-worn appearance of the President, that he came to the writer and confessed that he had received the same impression of the Chief Magistrate that many had; hearing of his "little stories" and his humor, he had supposed him to have no cares or sadness; but a sight of that anxious and sad face had undeceived him, and he wanted to tell the President how much he had unintentionally wronged him, feeling that he had committed upon him a personal wrong. The captain was duly introduced to the President, who talked with him privately for a space, being touched as well as amused at what he called "Captain M——'s freeing his mind."

The following week, spent in riding about and seeing the army, appeared to revive Mr. Lincoln's spirits and to rest his body. A friend present observed as much to him, and he replied, "Well, yes, I do feel some better, I think; but, somehow, it don't appear to touch the tired spot, which can't be got at." And that, by-the-way, reminded him of a little story of his having once used that word, spot, a great many times in the course of a speech in Congress, years ago, so that some of his fellow-members called him "spot Lincoln," but he believed that the nickname did not stick. Another reminiscence of his early life, which he recalled during the trip, was one concerning his experience in rail-split-

ting. We were driving through an open clearing, where the Virginia forest had been felled by the soldiers, when Mr. Lincoln observed, looking at the stumps, "That's a good job of felling; they have got some good axemen in this army, I see." The conversation turning upon his knowledge of rail-splitting, he said, "Now let me tell you about that. I am not a bit anxious about my reputation in that line of business; but if there is any thing in this world that I am a judge of, it is of good felling of timber, but I don't remember having worked by myself at splitting rails for one whole day in my life." Upon surprise being expressed that his national reputation as a rail-splitter should have so slight a foundation, he said, "I recollect that, some time during the canvass for the office I now hold, there was a great mass meeting, where I was present, and with a great flourish several rails were brought into the meeting, and being informed where they came from, I was asked to identify them, which I did, with some qualms of conscience, having helped my father to split rails, as at other odd jobs. I said if there were any rails which I had split, I shouldn't wonder if those were the rails." Those who may be disappointed to learn of Mr. Lincoln's limited experience in splitting rails, may be relieved to know that he was evidently proud of his knowledge of the art of cutting timber, and explained minutely how a good job differed from a poor one, giving illustrations from the ugly stumps on either side.

An amusing yet touching instance of the President's preoccupation of mind occurred at one of his levees, when he was shaking hands with a host of visitors, passing him in a continuous stream. An intimate acquaintance received the usual conventional hand-shake and salutation; but, perceiving that he was not recognized, kept his ground, instead of moving on, and spoke again; when the President, roused by a dim consciousness that something unusual had happened, perceived who stood before him, and seizing his friend's hand, shook it again heartily, saying, "How do you do? How do you do? Excuse me for not noticing you at first; the fact is, I was thinking of a man down South." He afterward privately acknowledged that the "man down South" was Sherman, then on his march to the sea.

Mr. Lincoln had not a hopeful temperament, and, though he looked at the bright side of things, was always prepared for disaster and defeat. With his wonderful faculty for discerning results he often saw success where others saw disaster, but oftener perceived a failure when others were elated with victory, or were temporarily deceived by appearances. Of a great cavalry raid, which filled the newspapers with glowing exultation, but failed to cut the communications which it had been designed to destroy, he briefly said: "That was good circus-riding; it will do to fill a column in the newspapers; but I don't see that it has brought any thing else to pass." He often said that the



worst feature about newspapers was that they were so sure to be "ahead of the hounds," out-running events, and exciting expectations which were sure to be disappointed. One of the worst effects of a victory, he said, was to lead people to expect that the war was about over in consequence of it; but he was never weary of commending the patience of the American people, which he thought something matchless and touching. I have seen him shed tears when speaking of the cheerful sacrifice of the light and strength of so many happy homes throughout the land. His own patience was marvelous; and never crushed at defeat or unduly excited by success, his demeanor under both was an example for all men. Once he said the keenest blow of all the war was at an early stage, when the disaster of Ball's Bluff and the death of his beloved Baker smote upon him like a whirlwind from a desert.

It is generally agreed that Mr. Lincoln's slowness was a prominent trait of his character; but it is too early, perhaps, to say how much of our safety and success we owe to his slowness. It may be said, however, that he is to-day admired and beloved as much for what he did not do as for what he did. He was well aware of the popular opinion concerning his slowness, but was only sorry that such a quality of mind should sometimes be coupled with weakness and vacillation. Such an accusation he thought to be unjust. Acknowledging that he was slow in arriving at conclusions, he said that he could not help that; but he believed that when he did arrive at conclusions they were clear and "stuck by." He was a profound believer in his own fixity of purpose, and took pride in saying that his long deliberations made it possible for him to stand by his own acts when they were once resolved upon. It would have been a relief to the country at one time in our history if this trait of the President's character had been better understood. There was no time, probably, during the last administration, when any of the so-called radical measures were in any danger of being qualified or recalled. The simple explanation of the doubt which often hung over his purposes may be found in the fact that it was a habit of his mind to put forward all of the objections of other people and of his own to any given proposition, to see what arguments or counter-statements could be brought against them. While his own mind might be perfectly clear upon the subject, it gave him real pleasure to state objections for others to combat or attempt to set aside.

His practice of being controlled by events is well known. He often said that it was wise to wait for the developments of Providence; and the Scriptural phrase that "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" to him had a depth of meaning. Then, too, he liked to feel that he was the attorney of the people, not their ruler; and I believe that this idea was generally uppermost in his mind. Speaking of the probability of his second nomination, about two

years ago, he said: "If the people think that I have managed their case for them well enough to trust me to carry up to the next term, I am sure that I shall be glad to take it."

He liked to provide for his friends, who were often remembered gratefully for services given him in his early struggles in life. Sometimes he would "break the slate," as he called it, of those who were making up a list of appointments, that he might insert the name of some old acquaintance who had befriended him in days when friends were few. He was not deceived by outside appearances, but took the measure of those he met, and few men were worth any more or any less than the value which Abraham Lincoln set upon them.

Upon being told that a gentleman upon whom he was about to confer a valuable appointment had been bitterly opposed to his renomination, he said: "I suppose that Judge —, having been disappointed before, did behave pretty ugly; but that wouldn't make him any less fit for this place, and I have a Scriptural authority for appointing him. You recollect that while the Lord on Mount Sinai was getting out a commission for Aaron, that same Aaron was at the foot of the mountain making a false god, a golden calf, for the people to worship; yet Aaron got his commission, you know." At another time, when remonstrated with upon the appointment to place of one of his former opponents, he said: "Nobody will deny that he is a first-rate man for the place, and I am bound to see that his opposition to me personally shall not interfere with my giving the people a good officer."

The world will never hear the last of the "little stories" with which the President garnished or illustrated his conversation and his early stump speeches. He said, however, that as near as he could reckon, about one-sixth of those which were credited to him were old acquaintances; all of the rest were the productions of other and better story-tellers than himself. Said he; "I do generally remember a good story when I hear it, but I never did invent any thing original; I am only a retail dealer." His anecdotes were seldom told for the sake of the telling, but because they fitted in just where they came, and shed a light on the argument that nothing else could. He was not witty, but brimful of humor; and though he was quick to appreciate a good pun, I never knew of his making but one, which was on the Christian name of a friend, to whom he said: "You have yet to be elected to the place I hold; but Noah's *reign* was before Abraham." He thought that the chief characteristic of American humor was its grotesqueness and extravagance; and the story of the man who was so tall that he was "laid out" in a rope-walk, the soprano voice so high that it had to be climbed over by a ladder, and the Dutchman's expression of "somebody tying his dog loose," all made a permanent lodgment in his mind.

His accuracy and memory were wonderful,



and one illustration of the former quality may be given in the remarkable correspondence between the figures of the result of the last presidential election and the actual sum total. The President's figures, collected hastily, and partially based upon his own estimates, made up only four weeks after the election, have been found to be only one hundred and twenty-nine less in their grand total than that made up by Mr. M'Pherson, the Clerk of the House of Representatives, who has compiled a table from the returns furnished him from the official records of all the State capitals in the loyal States.

Latterly Mr. Lincoln's reading was with the humorous writers. He liked to repeat from memory whole chapters from these books; and on such occasions he always preserved his own gravity though his auditors might be convulsed with laughter. He said that he had a dread of people who could not appreciate the fun of such things; and he once instanced a member of his own Cabinet, of whom he quoted the saying of Sydney Smith, "that it required a surgical operation to get a joke into his head." The light trifles spoken of diverted his mind, or, as he said of his theatre-going, gave him refuge from himself and his weariness. But he also was a lover of many philosophical books, and particularly liked Butler's Analogy of Religion, Stuart Mill on Liberty, and he always hoped to get at President Edwards on the Will. These ponderous writers found a queer companionship in the chronicler of the Mackerel Brigade, Parson Nasby, and Private Miles O'Reilly. The Bible was a very familiar study with the President, whole chapters of Isaiah, the New Testament, and the Psalms being fixed in his memory, and he would sometimes correct a misquotation of Scripture, giving generally the chapter and verse where it could be found. He liked the Old Testament best, and dwelt on the simple beauty of the historical books. Once, speaking of his own age and strength, he quoted with admiration that passage, "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." I do not know that he thought then how, like that Moses of old, he was to stand on Pisgah and see a peaceful land which he was not to enter.

Of the poets the President appeared to prefer Hood and Holmes, the mixture and pathos in their writings being attractive to him beyond any thing else which he read. Of the former author he liked best the last part of "Miss Kilmansegg and her Golden Leg," "Faithless Sally Brown," and one or two others not generally so popular as those which are called Hood's best poems. Holmes's "September Gale," "Last Leaf," "Chambered Nautilus," and "Ballad of an Oysterman" were among his very few favorite poems. Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" and "Birds of Killingworth" were the only productions of that author he ever mentioned with praise, the latter of which he picked up somewhere in a newspaper, cut out, and carried in his vest pocket until it was committed to memory. James Russell Lowell he only knew as

"Hosea Biglow," every one of whose effusions he knew. He sometimes repeated, word for word, the whole of "John P. Robinson, he," giving the unceasing refrain with great unction and enjoyment. He once said that originality and daring impudence were sublimed in this stanza of Lowell's:

"Ef you take a sword and dror it,  
An' stick a feller creetur thru,  
Gov'ment hain't to answer for it,  
God'll send the bill to you."

Mr. Lincoln's love of music was something passionate, but his tastes were simple and uncultivated, his choice being old airs, songs, and ballads, among which the plaintive Scotch songs were best liked. "Annie Laurie," "Mary of Argyle," and especially "Auld Robin Gray," never lost their charm for him; and all songs which had for their theme the rapid flight of time, decay, the recollections of early days, were sure to make a deep impression. The song which he liked best, above all others, was one called "Twenty Years Ago"—a simple air, the words to which are supposed to be uttered by a man who revisits the play-ground of his youth. He greatly desired to find music for his favorite poem, "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" and said once, when told that the newspapers had credited him with the authorship of the piece, "I should not care much for the reputation of having written that, but would be glad if I could compose music as fit to convey the sentiment as the words now do."

He wrote slowly, and with the greatest deliberation, and liked to take his time; yet some of his dispatches, written without any corrections, are models of compactness and finish. His private correspondence was extensive, and he preferred writing his letters with his own hand, making copies himself frequently, and filing every thing away in a set of pigeon-holes in his office. When asked why he did not have a letter-book and copying-press, he said, "A letter-book might be easily carried off, but that stock of filed letters would be a back-load." He conscientiously attended to his enormous correspondence, and read every thing that appeared to demand his own attention. He said that he read with great regularity the letters of an old friend who lived on the Pacific coast until he received a letter of *seventy pages* of letter paper, when he broke down, and never read another.

People were sometimes disappointed because he appeared before them with a written speech. The best explanation of that habit of his was his remark to a friend who noticed a roll of manuscript in the hand of the President as he came into the parlor while waiting for the serenade which was given him on the night following his re-election. Said he: "I know what you are thinking about; but there's no clap-trap about me, and I am free to say that in the excitement of the moment I am sure to say something which I am sorry for when I see it in print; so I have it here in black and white, and there are no mistakes made. People attach

too much importance to what I say any how." Upon another occasion, hearing that I was in the parlor, he sent for me to come up into the library, where I found him writing on a piece of common stiff box-board with a pencil. Said he, after he had finished, "Here is one speech of mine which has never been printed, and I think it worth printing. Just see what you think." He then read the following, which is copied *verbatim* from the familiar handwriting before me:

"On Thursday of last week two ladies from Tennessee came before the President, asking the release of their husbands, held as prisoners of war at Johnson's Island. They were put off until Friday, when they came again, and were again put off until Saturday. At each of the interviews one of the ladies urged that her husband was a religious man. On Saturday, when the President ordered the release of the prisoners, he said to this lady: 'You say your husband is a religious man; tell him when you meet him that I say I am not much of a judge of religion, but that, in my opinion, the religion that sets men to rebel and fight against their Government because, as they think, that Government does not sufficiently help some men to eat their bread in the sweat of other men's faces, is not the sort of religion upon which people can get to heaven.'"

To this the President signed his name at my request, by way of joke, and added for a caption, "The President's Last, Shortest, and Best Speech," under which title it was duly published in one of the Washington newspapers. His Message to the last session of Congress was first written upon the same sort of white pasteboard above referred to, its stiffness enabling him to lay it on his knee as he sat easily in his arm-chair, writing and erasing as he thought and wrought out his idea.

The already extended limits of this article will not permit any thing more than a mention of many of the traits of Mr. Lincoln's peculiar character, many of which are already widely known by his published writings and speeches, and by the numerous anecdotes which have been narrated by others who have been ready to meet the general desire to know more of the man whose life was so dear to the people. His thoughtfulness for those who bore the brunt of the battles, his harmonious family relations, his absorbing love for his children, his anxiety for the well-being and conduct of the emancipated colored people, his unwavering faith in the hastening doom of human slavery, his affectionate regard for "the simple people," his patience, his endurance, his mental sufferings, and what he did for the Nation and for Humanity and Liberty—these all must be left to the systematic and enduring labors of the historian. Though he is dead, his immortal virtues are the rich possession of the nation; his fame shall grow with our young Republic; and as years roll on brighter lustre will adorn the name of Abraham Lincoln.

## ANECDOTES OF UNITARIAN DIVINES.

THE REV. DR. SPRAGUE, of Albany, a distinguished clergyman of the Presbyterian Church, and equally distinguished as a man of letters, long after he had completed his fiftieth year undertook a literary work of great magnitude, which he has lived nearly to accomplish. It is a biography of all the most distinguished American clergymen of the various denominations, from the settlement of the country to the year 1855, under the general title of "Annals of the American Pulpit." Successive volumes have from time to time been issued from the press of Robert Carter and Brothers, who have just published the eighth volume of the series, containing biographical sketches of the Unitarian clergy of the United States. It contains the memoirs of eighty clergymen, gathered and prepared with an incredible amount of labor, and making a treasury of interesting material, not only for the denomination specified, but for all who are interested in the theological and literary history of the country. The theological part of it we leave for other hands and other journals, but we shall endeavor to cull some of the material which will be instructive and entertaining to the readers of this Magazine.

The first of the clergymen whose lives are here recorded was the Rev. EBENEZER GAY, D.D., who was born at Dedham, Massachusetts, in the year 1696. He lived to the age of ninety-one years. The length of his ministry, from the day of his ordination to his decease, was more than sixty-eight years, and his entire ministry, from the commencement of his preaching, was but a few months short of seventy years. Upon the day on which he completed his eighty-fifth year he preached a sermon from the text, Josh. xiv. 10, "I am this day fourscore and five years old," which was published under the title of "The Old Man's Calendar," and in which he made this remarkable record: "Lo, now, my brethren, I am this day fourscore and five years old—a wonder of God's sparing mercy; sixty-three of these years have I spent in the work of the ministry among you. One hundred and forty-six years ago your fathers came with their pastor and settled in this place [Hingham, Massachusetts]. I am the third in the pastorate of this church, which hath not been two years vacant."

He was evidently a man of considerable humor, as appears not only from many anecdotes which are recorded of him, but from his choice of texts for his public services. He preached a discourse at one time from the passage in Luke, "Remember Lot's wife," designed to counteract some of the tendencies of the times, and entitled it, "A Pillar of Salt to Season a Corrupt Age." At the installation of the Rev. Ezra Carpenter, at Keene, in 1753, he preached from the passage, Zechariah, ii. 1: "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and beheld a man with a measuring line in his hand." Having for a